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ARGENTINA PROJECT (S200000044)
U.S. DEPT. OF STATE, A/RPS/IPS
Margaret P. Grafeld, Director
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Date Declassify on Reason

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E.O. 12065GDS

TAGS:NATO, XM

SUBJECT:(U) EXPERTS REPORT ON LATIN AMERICA

REF: USNATO 01094

[REDACTED] - ENTIRE TEXT

THERE FOLLOWS THE TEXT OF THE U.S. CONTRIBUTION TO THE
REPORT BY THE NATO EXPERTS WORKING GROUP ON "TRENDS IN
LATIN AMERICA". BEGIN TEXT:

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Pages 2-12 have been eliminated because they are entirely irrelevant.

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C. ARGENTINA

-- 39. GENERAL DISSATISFACTION WITH THE VIDELA GOVERNMENT'S ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL PERFORMANCE REACHED NEAR DANGEROUS PROPORTIONS IN LATE 1978. MORE BELLICOSE MILITARY COLLEAGUES OPENLY SUPPORTED MILITARY ACTION AGAINST CHILE OVER THE BEAGLE CHANNEL, MAKING VIDELA

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APPEAR TIMID AND INDECISIVE BY COMPARISON. BADLY ORCHES-TRATED CABINET CHANGES IN LATE OCTOBER AND CONTINUING ECONOMIC PROBLEMS FURTHER DETRACTED FROM THE GOVERNMENT'S

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PUBLIC IMAGE.

-- 40. VIDELA'S POLITICAL STOCK HAS SINCE RECOVERED SOMEWHAT, AND HE IS IN NO IMMEDIATE DANGER OF REMOVAL. ACHIEVING PAPAL MEDIATION OF THE BEAGLE CHANNEL DISPUTE WON VIDELA THE PLAUDITS OF MOST ARGENTINES WHO WERE PREPARED TO ACCEPT BUT DID NOT RELISH WAR WITH CHILE. THE ANNUAL ARMY PROMOTION/REASSIGNMENT CYCLE, DELAYED

UNTIL JANUARY BY THE BEAGLE CHANNEL CRISIS, BROUGHT ADDED SUPPORT FOR THE PRESIDENT AND HIS MODERATE SUPPORTERS IN THE MILITARY. MOST NOTABLY WERE THE TRANSFERS OF TWO HARDLINE GENERAL OFFICERS WHOSE TOLERATION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES HAD FREQUENTLY EMBARRASSED THE GOVERNMENT. MAJ. GEN. CARLOS GUILLERMO SUAREZ MASON WAS TRANSFERRED FROM HIS CORPS I (BUENOS AIRES) COMMAND TO CHIEF OF STAFF, AND MAJ. GEN. SANTIAGO OMAR RIVEROS WAS SHIFTED FROM MILITARY INSTITUTES (CAMPO DE MAYO, BUENOS AIRES) TO THE INTER-AMERICAN DEFENSE BOARD IN WASHINGTON. BOTH OFFICERS WERE REPLACED BY MEN LOYAL TO VIDELA AND ARMY COMMANDER MAJ. GEN. ROBERTO VIOLA. THESE AND OTHER CHANGES COULD BE SIGNIFICANT IN FUTURE ATTEMPTS TO CURB HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES AND MAKE THE ARMY GENERALLY MORE POLITICALLY RESPONSIVE TO THE DIRECTION OF VIDELA AND VIOLA.



-- 42. VIDELA MAINTAINS HIS PUBLIC SUPPORT FOR MARTINEZ

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DE HOZ, DESPITE MOUNTING OPPOSITION TO THE MINISTER, EVEN WITHIN THE ARMED FORCES. IF MARTINEZ DE HOZ CANNOT STEM INFLATION, HOWEVER, HE WILL BECOME AN UNSUPPORTABLE POLITICAL LIABILITY FOR VIDELA.



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-- 44. DESPITE THE VIRTUAL ANNIHILATION OF ANY VIABLE TERRORIST THREAT, HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES CONTINUED TO CHARACTERIZE THE WORK OF ARGENTINE SECURITY UNITS IN 1978. QUANTITATIVELY, THERE WAS PROBABLY AN IMPROVEMENT OVER THE

1976-77 PERIOD, BUT ABUSES REMAINED FREQUENT AND SERIOUS. DISAPPEARANCES, THE INDEFINITE DETENTION OF STATE-OF-SEIGE PRISONERS, TORTURE AND PRISONER MISTREATMENT REMAIN PROBLEM AREAS OF MAJOR CONCERN TO DOMESTIC AND FOREIGN OBSERVERS. DESPITE THE PERSONAL INCLINATIONS OF PRESIDENT VIDELA AND LIKEMINDED MILITARY OFFICERS, THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE EFFECTIVE OFFICIAL ACTION TO HALT THE ABUSES. THE ARMY COMMAND CHANGES NOTED ABOVE AND THE INTER-AMERICAN

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HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION VISIT TO ARGENTINA SCHEDULED FOR LATE MAY RAISE THE POSSIBILITY OF POSITIVE HUMAN RIGHTS DEVELOPMENTS IN THE NEAR FUTURE.

-- 45. U.S. RELATIONS WITH ARGENTINA ARE SOMEWHAT STRAINED BECAUSE OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE. PERSISTENT VIOLATIONS PROMPTED THE TERMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF U.S. SECURITY ASSISTANCE ON SEPTEMBER 30, 1978, AND ARGENTINA'S 1978 HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD LED THE U.S. TO ABSTAIN IN INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS ON ARGENTINE LOAN REQUESTS THAT DO NOT MEET BASIC HUMAN NEEDS CRITERIA. ECONOMIC ISSUES AND COOPERATION IN NUCLEAR ENERGY MATTERS CONSTITUTE OTHER IMPORTANT POINTS OF BILATERAL CONTACT, BUT CLOSE RELATIONS WILL NOT BE RESTORED UNTIL THE HUMAN RIGHTS PERFORMANCE OF THE ARGENTINE GOVERNMENT IMPROVES.

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